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WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FACING THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN STANDBY FORCE?

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ABSTRACT

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Following its transition from the Organization of African Unity to the African Union, African leaders agreed on a common vision of a strongly united continent aimed at building close economic ties among African governments. As a continental organization it focused on the promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa through regional economic blocks. Armed ethnic conflicts, civil wars and failing states continue to pose a threat not only confined to Africa, but to the international peace and stability, especially in today's Global war on Terrorism. The formation of the African Standby Force is a way forward towards containment of armed conflicts, but its establishment will be a major challenge calling for strong commitments and political will from all nations. While different regions had already established Peace and Security initiatives, it has proven difficult for Africa to achieve stability without outside assistance. This project examines the challenges facing the formation of the African Stand by Force, and it further assesses the regional conflict resolution mechanisms' successes and failures to identify lessons learned that ASF could draw from. The research reveals why ASF cannot succeed without assistance from the West, and provides recommendations for a successful and robust Standby Force.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FACING THE FUTURE OF AFRICAN STANDBY FORCE?

The African Union (AU) was formed on the basis of a common vision of a strongly united continent, and with the intention to build very close ties among African governments. As a continental organization it focuses on the promotion of peace, security and stability in Africa. These are the union's prerequisites for the development of economy, improvement of living standards, and alleviation of poverty in the continent. Without peace and stability, Africa will be deprived of effective integration in the global village. Africa is a continent torn apart by armed ethnic conflicts, civil wars and failing states that are a threat not only confined to specific regions, but to the international peace and stability. The AU peace and security initiative resulted in the formation of the African Standby Force, which will be responsible for maintenance of peace. However its success will be determined by the level of training, equipment and the political will of all involved Governments.[1]

This paper examines current efforts to develop Africa's capabilities to undertake peace keeping and peace enforcement operations. To achieve this, it will assess those limitations contributing to ineffectiveness of the present peace initiative mechanisms. In addition, the paper will also examine challenges facing the future of the African Stand by Force, and further discuss the U.S./European initiatives to assist Africa's development of conflict resolution capabilities with the aim to determine if African Stand by Force can fulfill its objectives without a considerable assistance rendered by the First World countries.

The changing world of today saw Africa departing from the Cold War era whereby nations looked at themselves as entities in an ideological or geopolitical struggle of the two Super power blocks. In the name of new regionalism, African regional organisations developed close cooperation motivated by the realization of the continent's marginalization by the western World. This move was meant to ensure that governments no longer confine themselves to national economical and political interests alone. It enabled nations to work together to enhance regional development both economically and politically at a strategic level, aimed at improving not only individual national economies, but encompassing the region as a whole in a way conducive to peace and stability. Regional cooperation binds member nations to respect issues such as national sovereignty, human rights, and alleviation of violence. Different African regional Organizations established Peace and Security initiatives and developed peace keeping structures. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) have made much progress in the implementation of conflict resolution initiatives. The Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) established the Council for Common

Defence in 1990. The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) established a Standing Advisory Committee on Security Matters in Central Africa through the UN in 1992 and signed a Non-aggression Pact. The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) expanded its mandate to include enabling its mediation commitment to Sudanese conflict in 1994. These Regional Organizations are structured to support the Organization of African Unity (OAU) mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution. They originated from the 1990 Declaration of the Heads of state and Government of the OAU on Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and fundamental changes taking Place in the World.[2] The OAU was later transformed into the African Union upon initiation by the Lusaka Treaty in 2001.

ECOWAS Crisis Resolution Mechanisms

Territorial disputes and armed conflicts in some parts of Africa have been ongoing since the end of colonization. These are principal threats to continental stability that require governments' willingness to commit their military resources in the name of peace and stability. ECOWAS in the West African region found the need to develop a diplomatic and military framework necessary to address such crises. Founded in 1975 with the initial aim of promoting regional economic and social integration, the organization's mandate could not address increasing conflicts in the region, and the threat led to an introduction of a regional defense protocol that was adopted in 1978. This was seen as the first step towards ECOWAS peace and security initiation, obliging member states to refrain from threat or use of force or aggression against the territorial integrity of other member states, and to refrain from conducting or encouraging acts of subversion or hostility against one another. Another protocol was later adopted in 1981 intended to address those limitations identified in the 1978 Protocol. It included member states' obligation to enforce measures to resolve intrastate conflicts fueled by support from external sources, or by a non ECOWAS state.[3]

A major threat to regional stability was the escalation of armed conflict in Liberia launched from Cote d' Ivoire in 1989. Organized armed movement called the National Patriotic Front Liberation (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor conducted acts of aggression with an objective to overthrow ruling Samuel Doe's regime. ECOWAS intervened by use of diplomacy when it initiated the Standing Mediation Committee (SMC) to engage warring parties in peace talks. Diplomacy proved to be ineffective until 1990 when Nigeria called for enforcement of the Defense Protocol resulting in the deployment of ECOWAS Military Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). The deployment of ECOMOG was critical because none of the Western countries

were willing to intervene militarily in the region, but intervention was the best option to avoid escalation of fighting that could ultimately affect most of the ECOWAS countries.[4]

Challenges to ECOWAS Operations

Although this regional intervention militarily would set a precedence of cooperation to other African sub-regions to follow, and serve as a signal to the international community that Africa was capable of responding to security challenges, ECOMOG experienced numerous challenges that affected its success. There were five challenges facing ECOMOG operations which will be discussed below:

Firstly, ECOWAS was seriously divided between English and French speaking countries: out of the sixteen member states(Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo), majority were Francophone who feared Nigeria's dominance as the most powerful Anglophone state in the region. Economic disparities between Nigeria and the Francophone countries, individual national interests among member states, and colonial legacies were the main obstacles to a solid regional cooperation. Secondly, there was lack of unity because most of the troops were contributed by Anglophone member states (Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Gambia), and Nigeria carried the burden of contributing almost 70 percent of troops and equipment for most of ECOMOG mission. On the other hand, other member states such as Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire secretly supported Taylor. In addition, Nigeria dominated the military command for most of the time and this fact further contributed towards lack of unity because Francophone countries perceived it as Nigeria's advancement of its national interests. Thirdly, ECOMOG deployment was surrounded by political differences among member states over its mandate, contributing states disagreed on the issue of whether the contingent should act as peacekeeping or where necessary should adopt a peace enforcement role. Fourthly, ECOMOG took advantage of a split within Taylor's forces when the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) emerged to fight both the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and NPFL. Taking sides in favor of INPFL eased the pressure of financial cost and casualties on ECOMOG while creating further instability that resulted in Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone governments overthrown by their own military forces. Lastly ECOMOG deployed unprepared for the mission because it had poor means of communication and poor incompatible equipment that was also poorly maintained. Furthermore it had poor intelligence of the enemy and the battle ground.[5]

The credibility of ECOMOG was critically affected by the then Nigerian president Babangida when he nullified his country's national elections in 1993. His decision damaged Nigeria's potential to play a major role in bringing democracy in the war torn Liberia which he could not uphold it in his country. This resulted in wide criticism within and outside the region that Babangida was using his country's wealth to advance personal interest in Liberia, and it also confirmed Charles Taylor's argument that Nigeria's dominance over ECOMOG could not bring peace to Liberia.[6] The United Nations (UN) sponsored peace negotiations between warring factions held in Geneva mid July 1993 which addressed the cease fire; transitional authority, and a time line to hold national election within seven months. This led to the final agreement being signed in Cotonou Benin on the 24th July 1993. UN involvement brought some level of neutrality over Nigeria's dominance, which was the initial breakthrough to a possible solution. However, cooperation between ECOMOG and UN was not achieved immediately due to UN late involvement in crisis resolution. This created animosity among ECOMOG soldiers who felt that UN got involved very late when the mission was almost achieved, and that credibility would then be given to the UN. The other problem developed from the fact that the UN observer group had a superior logistic support over ECOMOG troops. Financial limitations in ECOMOG troops contributing nations created disparities in both allowance pays and poor supply of equipment that affected equipment serviceability. Lack of coordination was also attributed to the weak Cotonou Accord because it failed to clearly explain who had the ultimate control of the forces on the ground. This was evident in a situation whereby a major decision had to be made regarding control of the troops which ended with the ECOMOG contingent commander having the final word.[7]

Despite the challenges it encountered, ECOWAS made an effort to address the Liberian conflict that endangered regional stability, and at the time when none of the Western countries indicated willingness to intervene. The lessons learned in Liberia present a basis on which the formation of African Standby Force can draw upon for future military intervention. It is therefore imperative to note that national interest will always guide troop contributing nations' goal in peace keeping intervention, and without close international organization monitoring these national interests, an intervention for the purpose of building peace and stability can easily turn into further creation of instability in African sub-regions.[8]

SADC Crisis Resolution Mechanisms

South African Government's intention to establish a Constellation of Southern African states during the apartheid era triggered initiation of the Southern African Development Co-

ordination Conference (SADCC) in 1979. The Co-ordination Conference was formally adopted in 1980 by governments of the nine Front Line States (Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) as a balance against South Africa's attempted hegemony in the region. Resistance to apartheid became a binding string that brought these countries together in a way which could not otherwise have been possible because of their differing political and economical strategies. In response to a rapidly changing regional and international political climate, SADCC implemented a new treaty that brought the Southern African Development Community (SADC) into existence in August 1992. Today the Community has additional member States namely South Africa, Namibia, Mauritius, Democratic Republic of Congo DRC and Madagascar.[9]

As a way to promote regionalism, SADC introduced different protocols to enable interdependence among its member states. The Organ for Defense, Politics and Security was created in 1996 under the secretariat of Inter-State Defense and Security Committee (ISDSC) to address issues relating to conflict prevention, management, and resolution.[10] The Organ was put to test for the first time in 1998 when the then DRC president Laurent Kabila appealed for assistance from SADC to rescue his Government from external threat posed by the *Rassemblement Congolais Pour la Democratie* (RCD), a rebel force actively supported by Rwanda and Uganda. Following Kabila's appeal for assistance, Zimbabwe president Robert Mugabe called for a SADC meeting in Zimbabwe with the aim to solicit support for military intervention. Despite lack of blessing from the entire SADC member states, Mugabe spoke in his capacity as the then chairman of SADC Defense, Politics and Security Organ announcing that the meeting had agreed to provide military support to Kabila's regime. Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe later deployed troops to fight alongside the DRC Government troops.[11]

Impact of SADC Military Intervention in the DRC

The decision to get SADC involved militarily in DRC created division among SADC Member States. President Mugabe's action revealed a clear power conflict between himself as the man in charge of the Politico- Security Organ of SADC and Nelson Mandela who was the Chairman of SADC during the period. This became evident when President Mandela later convened a follow up SADC head states meeting in Pretoria South Africa to address the DRC issue, which President Mugabe and the Angolan President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos failed to attend. This extraordinary meeting was intended to push for a diplomatic approach to the DRC conflict because Mandela invited presidents of Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and the Secretary General of OAU. On the other hand, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Angola presidents claimed that

their troop deployment in the conflict zone was justified by the fact that the intervention was based on the Organ's decision though it was non-operational at the time. Mandela's argument was that negotiations on the DRC issue were supposed to be handled at the SADC highest level, not by the Organ. Tension between Mugabe and Mandela over the DRC issue was more pronounced when both presidents exchanged strong statements. Mugabe stated clearly to Mandela that "*No SADC country is compelled to help [a brother country]. But those who don't want to help should keep quiet when those who want to do so.*" He further indicated his preference to involve the OAU since it had the Organ legitimate to address the conflict since SADC was divided over the issue. The difference between the two simmered down when Mandela changed his heart over Mugabe's decision during an unscheduled SADC Head of States meeting held later when he announced SADC blessing on the three Countries intervention in the DRC.[12]

The end of the Cold War and anti-colonial/anti-apartheid conflicts in the region opened a window for stability in SADC. Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980, Namibia in 1990, South Africa and Mozambique had their first democratic elections in 1994, and Angola ceased hostilities in 2001 bringing end to the initial wave of post-Independence armed conflict in the SADC region. It is however evident that the DRC acceptance as a member of SADC in 1997 brought more challenges to the organization.[13] Three problems affecting the DRC are discussed below.

Firstly the Government of the DRC was not democratically elected, which contravenes one of SADC stated principles of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.[14]

Secondly DRC conflict involved some non-SADC member countries that had deep rooted ethnicity and economic agendas. For instance, Rwanda claims to have been drawn into the conflict because of Kabila's support to the Hutu Interahamwe militia group that launched attacks from DRC. Rwanda has justified its involvement as being to protect its borders, while on the other hand, the DRC accused it of using this as an excuse to deploy 20 000 troops to control and exploit natural resources such as diamond and coltan.[15] Uganda is blamed for providing military support to armed groups fighting Kabila's regime and is also accused of fuelling the conflict in order to prolong the fighting. Uganda deployed its troops in the eastern part of the DRC in 1998 to strengthen allies in its strategic border region with the DRC, by so doing it supplied weapons and provided training to the DRC rebels in the Ituri region, which is rich in minerals essential for Uganda to boost its economy. However, Uganda denies allegations that it fuelled the conflict to satisfy its economic needs by extracting natural resources from the DRC. It justified its role as that of protecting its borders from incursions by the Allied Democratic Force

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(ADF), a resistance armed group fighting Museveni's regime from the DRC.[16] Chad entered the war to protect Libyan business under Libya's financial support, while Sudan got drawn into the conflict to back Kabila's regime. Sudan supported Ugandan rebels (ADF) based in the DRC, hence Sudanese involvement in the war to keep Kabila in power in order to enable continued military support to ADF. Sudan provided support to Kabila as part of its war with Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA). On the other hand, Uganda provided military support to SPLA aimed at maintaining SPLA's resistance towards the Sudanese regime. The U.S. Government contributed millions of dollars in military aid to Uganda that was further given to SPLA. France and Libya provided financial backing for Zimbabwe deployment; China supplied weapons.[17]

Angola's interest in the DRC conflict linked to the cooperation between rebel forces in the DRC and Uniao Nacional pela Independencia Total de Angola (UNITA) rebels fighting to overthrow the Government of Angola. The down fall of Kabila's regime would be detrimental to Angolan Government because it was assumed that UNITA would then enjoy continued support from any successor. On the other hand, Namibia was dragged into the war in support of Angola as the Angolan civil war had a direct impact on sovereignty of Namibia. UNITA rebels incursions into Angola were staged either from Northern Namibia or from the DRC, hence Namibia's difficult choice to align itself with Angola. Zimbabwe's President took the risk to his country's already deteriorating stability by opting to save Kabila's regime in pursuit of material gains in form of mining concessions to boost his country's economy.[18]

Thirdly private companies, especially, from Europe played an important role in prolonging the war by providing finances to the warring parties. Some companies had developed networks with key political figures and businessmen in the DRC and other countries were involved in the conflict to exploit natural resources. Still others provided finance through "taxes" paid to those rebel groups controlling some mining areas, generating funds that were used by rebels to purchase weapons and ammunition. The flow of finance in the conflict zone was also blamed on the corruption practiced by military personnel of countries involved.[19]

SADC Intervention in Lesotho

Shortly after the DRC president's request for SADC assistance, another call was made by the Prime Minister of Lesotho Pakalitha Mosisili in September 1998 following acts of violence in the Kingdom due to allegations of elections fraud. Opposition parties demanded that King Letsie III should use his powers to dismantle parliament. This led to junior members of the armed forces take over the law and imprisoned their commanders.[20]

Botswana and South Africa responded by deploying troops in Lesotho claiming to be acting in the name of SADC. Although this was seen as South Africa's protection of its national interest identified to be the strategic water reserve of Katse Dam, ''a major water source supplying South Africa with fresh water.''[21] South Africa insisted that the intervention was justified by Lesotho Prime Minister's request and was sanctioned by SADC. It also argued that Lesotho Government was democratically elected despite allegations of irregularities, and that South Africa had an important role to play in regional Peace Keeping issues.[22] The political justification of Operation Boleas was unclear from the regional perspective due to the confusion surrounding the modalities for security cooperation under the auspices of SADC. Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe declared that SADC had authorized a possible military intervention in Lesotho in the event of a possible coup while the SADC Heads of States in a previous meeting had only expressed their concern over the situation of unrest and loss of lives following recent elections in that country. The legality of Lesotho's request for assistance was also questionable in that the Prime Minister did not consult with the King as required by the country's constitution.[23] Poor planning and coordination between Botswana and South Africa resulted in late arrival of Botswana troops in Lesotho. Poor assessment of the situation resulted in deployment of fewer troops with inadequate equipment to handle the resistance, and there was no good intelligence on the ground because South African troops did not well understand the terrain. The positive side was that the task force did not have command and control problems, and hostilities were eventually successfully terminated resulting in stability in the country.[24]

The Creation of African Standby Force (ASF)

Africans had to find a way to address challenges that confronted them. They chose to promote a framework of solidarity through which they could support each other and achieve their aspirations of self-determination, respect and the ability to live in peace as a breakthrough to embracing globalism. AU has been the basis from which member states indicated their willingness to take risks for peace and accept their share of responsibility for the continental stability and development. The first step was initiation of the protocol relating to Peace and Security Council (PSC) of African Union and entering it into force in December 2003. The council is composed of fifteen members, five of which are elected every three years and remaining ten are elected every two years. Its objectives as indicated in the protocol include the promotion of peace, security and stability by anticipating and preventing conflicts in the continent. In case of a conflict, the PSC will take the responsibility of peace building through dialogue and mediation. It also acts as the authority for deployment and management of the AU-

led peace and stability operations. The decision to intervene requires a common perspective on what threat to the peace would entail, and the AU Constitutive Act has defined the conditions under which a collective response could be implemented.[25] To facilitate duties of the PSC, especially the implementation of Common African Defense and Security Policy, the AU equipped the PSC with three key bodies: Panel of the Wise, Continental Early Warning System, and the Standby Force. The Panel of the Wise is a team of highly respected Africans with wide experience relating to peace and security activities in the continent. Their role will be to provide the council with advice on areas of peace and security. The Early Warning System is a mechanism that has the capacity to collect, process and act on information in order to provide the council with early warning regarding threats to peace and security. Lastly the Standby Force is composed of civilians, police and military components located in their respective countries but capable of rapid deployment at short notice. The Force shall operate in various areas and carry out all types of peacekeeping/peace enforcement missions and disaster relief operations. ASF will be based on a Brigade size force to be provided by each of the five African regions, and the force will operate on the following six mission scenarios under the mandate of the AU:

- Scenario 1: AU/regional military advice to political mission.
- Scenario 2: AU/regional observation mission co-deployed with UN mission.
- Scenario 3: Stand alone AU/regional observer mission
- Scenario 4: AU/regional peace keeping force for Chapter VII and preventive deployment
- Scenario 5: AU peace keeping force for complex multidimensional peace keeping missions.
- Scenario 6: AU military intervention in circumstances such as genocides where international community fails to act promptly.[26]

The establishment of the Standby force will be done in two phases. In phase one (up to 30 June 2005), the Commission of the AU was expected to develop its capacity to manage scenario 1 and 2 missions, while the regions were expected to assemble standby brigade groups capable of handling scenario four, including a small full-time planning element. In phase two (1 July 2005 up to 30 June 2010) the Commission will work to develop the capacity to manage scenario five, while all regions are expected to have increased their rapid deployment capability. The following deployment timeline target was recommended for the Standby Force: deployment for simpler missions should be accomplished in thirty days, deployment for complex missions should be completed in ninety days, with military component being able to deploy in thirty days.[27]

Challenges to the Future of the ASF

      The success of the ASF lies within the AU, and therefore it is imperative that African Heads of States should show political will and support for effective implementation of the AU Constitutive Act. The road ahead is not an easy one, it will require AU and its regional groupings to address those strategic and operational challenges related to the complexities of multinational peace enforcement tasks. The ability to plan, command, direct and support a multinational peacekeeping force has been identified as a key element of rapid deployment capacity. However, in order to meet the set timeframes, the AU must also have the capacity to react quickly on three interdependent aspects of rapid deployment: personnel, material readiness, and funding.

      The issue of HIV/AIDS in Africa is another setback to the future of ASF. Previous deployment of troops to war torn countries such as Liberia, Burundi and the DRC has contributed to relative stability. On the other hand, the spread of HIV/AIDS is partly blamed on those troops deployed for peace keeping. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) records, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is high among African armed forces, and presents serious challenges towards troop contribution for the ASF. High prevalence leads to alarming loss of experienced senior officers at all levels of command, and loss of specialized and technically trained staff that cannot be replaced within a short period of time. The other concern is fear of attending injured soldiers due to possibility of contacting the virus, blood transfusion is no longer safe due to the virus and this is becoming one of the limitations of medical support provision during military operations. This is a challenge that requires regional leaders' commitment to address HIV/AIDS pandemic.[28]

      Logistical support is a primary and fundamental challenge for deployment due to lack of sufficient logistics and equipment stocks to support peacekeepers in-theater, as well as mission-specific items such as communications equipment. Transportation is also fundamental, this includes airlift or sealift into a mission area, and appropriate vehicles for the mission once in the field. It is also important to address the issue of equipment standardization at regional level to enable deployment with inter-operable equipment in order to reduce the cost of logistics support. Colonialism and the Cold War influenced procurement of military hardware among African nations, hence a mixture of Western and Eastern Block military hardware making it difficult to standardize. However, standardization in key areas where interoperability is essential such as inter-unit communications is required, but would have to be discussed within regions because this will impact national governments' defense procurement practices. Each region requires the capability to stockpile essential equipment to facilitate rapid deployment of

equipment, thus a need for suitable central logistics facility to further enable a cost effective logistics support. On the other hand, poor lines of communication between these facilities and deployment areas present another challenge to rapid deployment capability, especially, during wet seasons when roads are difficult to negotiate. The ASF framework has proposed a system of AU Military Logistics Depot (AMLD), a logistics structure and re-supply system based on the UN logistics base concept, with each region having its regional logistics depot and the AU depot will be established at Addis Ababa.[29]

In developing its African Standby Force concept, the AU needs to provide a clearer understanding of the role of these forces and identify a common doctrine and strategy to guide the sub-regional groups in developing their roles. Multilateral training programs should be conducted at regional level aimed at improving operational capability and cohesion building. Centers like the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center in Ghana can play a role in development of AU doctrine and incorporating lessons learned from ECOWAS, SADC and other regional organizations with peace keeping operations experience, and this should be reinforced by putting in place a mechanism to track training programs and new initiatives at regional and national levels in an attempt to resolve the issue of training, the AU has agreed to carry out the following actions:

- Conduct of workshops aimed at developing standardized Standard Operations Procedures (SOPs)
- Facilitation of doctrinal coherence and dissemination of lessons learnt.
- The AU and regional Planning elements (PLANELs) will harmonize ASF training cycle with UN and external initiatives in order to enhance and synergize ASF capabilities
- Adoption of an appropriate training policy providing for cycling of national, regional and AU-wide training. This activity should be coordinated with external initiatives, and has to be consistent with UN doctrine with a view to standardizing doctrine. Based on the Standard Generic Training Modules (SGTM), ASF training beyond this level would be regionally coordinated and enhanced through regional peace keeping centers of excellence.
- Regions should use existing national training institutions within the various regions to optimize their regional profile and use.
- Efforts of the PLANELMs should be deployed to develop all aspects of the ASF training policy, including the development of ASF SOPs, tables of equipment and other manuals.

- Seek appropriate advice for development of doctrine for robust humanitarian intervention missions.
- Where necessary, the UN Department of Peace Keeping Operations (DPKO) would be required to assist with training the trainer and pre-deployment training for ASF contingents.[30]

Funding of the ASF is another problem that the AU has to find a way to address. Regional peace support operations are currently funded through bilateral arrangements between troops contributing nations and donor states because AU is unable to provide such funds. Lack of funds to support these operations will reduce the level of participation from less developed countries, and therefore affecting political cohesion at regional level. A major obstacle that AU is most likely to face is the actual reimbursement of costs incurred by individual states undertaking peace support operations under the auspices of AU, and without adequate finance, the ASF will not meet its intended purpose of providing military solution to conflict affected areas.[31] One way to address funding issue is for the AU and its regions to maintain their traditional bilateral and multilateral cooperation with developed countries in order to further provide financial assistance. On the other hand, the AU has committed itself to carry out some assessment aimed at determining the financial requirement for the ASF. The AU has agreed to assess the cost of ASF structure, including pre-deployment activities such as training and PLANELM activities. It also intended to assess the cost of the types of missions based on the relevant level of forces and mandate; with an average mission timeframe of between one and two years, and another assessment for a short term peace support mission with a timeframe of between six months and one year only. AU member states will also be encouraged to maintain a good record of their contribution to the AU peace fund.[32]

Corruption and bad governance are other problems posing a threat to the effectiveness of the Standby Force. Even though African leaders have shown willingness to solve African problems, leaders such as Mugabe of Zimbabwe have acted otherwise by destroying the country's economy when he made the decision to take over white farmers land, while bringing starvation to a country that used to be one of Africa's agricultural success stories. Practice of corruption in the DRC prolonged the civil war causing unnecessary sufferings to civilians, while in Nigeria the oil wealth is not equally distributed to benefit the entire population. These are prevailing conditions that may discourage international donors and debt relief to Africa, as long as such conditions prevail, the international community can not be convinced that financial aid will be used for the intended purpose.[33]

The ASF will provide the AU with the capability to react timely towards crises in the region. Hopefully, with this kind of arrangements, the history of genocide such as in Rwanda will not repeat itself. However, it remains to be seen if the composition of the force for specific missions in terms of the ethnicity of the troops contributed will not hinder ASF's neutrality and impartiality. The demarcation of African boundaries during the colonial era has cut off tribes and separated them between states. This situation will present a daunting challenge to ASF. The Great Lakes conflicts that are on going at the moment serve as a good example of how ethnicity impacts between neighboring countries. Neutrality may be further undermined by the existence of regional hegemony, as it was the case with Nigeria during ECOWAS intervention in Liberia; and South African intervention during Operation Boleas in Lesotho. Even though regional major powers provide their regions with the resources, capacity and political legitimacy to respond to regional conflict, their dependency on regional hegemony compels small countries' peace and security agendas to be shaped by domestic problems and national interests of regional major power countries. Reliance on regional powers also raises the question of how to address regional conflicts whereby the regional power state is part of the conflict. The question of impartiality is one of the main challenges to the future of the ASF, especially, with regard to ethnicity.[34]

The G8 Assistance Plan to AU

As mentioned earlier in the paper, leaders of AU member states have shown their willingness to contribute towards a better Africa through commitment of forces towards the ASF, but without outside assistance, this will never be a dream come true. For this reason, the G8 leaders made a commitment to develop African capacity to promote peace and security through development of a Joint Africa/G8 Plan to mobilize technical and financial assistance that will give Africa the ability to engage more effectively in peace support operations by 2010. The G8 proposed taking a step-by-step approach to building an ASF and identified additional building blocks, including:

- Development of capacities to provide humanitarian, security and reconstruction support.
- Establishment of early warning centers to support institutional capacities to prevent conflict through mediation, facilitation, and observation.
- Establishment of priority regional logistic depots, and standardization of training doctrines, manuals, curricula and programs for both civilian (including police) and military personnel.
- Enhanced capacity in regional peace training centers.

- Continued joint exercises at the regional level, and current regional peacekeeping initiatives.

The G8 further recommended that the AU host an annual consultation between the AU and all interested donors on the enhancement of African capacity to engage in peace support operations. Such consultations could provide an ongoing mechanism to review the joint plan and its implementation. To complement these consultations, it has also been proposed that the UN generate a database of information on donor activity to support the development of African peacekeeping capacities.[35]

Military assistance continues to be conducted bilaterally and at regional level. The US provides training and long-term capacity building programmes for different parts of Africa, such as the Joint/Combined Exchange Training (JCET), African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance program (ACOTA), The International Military Education and Training (IMET) and the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies (ACSS). France followed the U.S. initiative through a programme called Renforcement Des Capacites Africaines De Maintien De Paix (RECAMP), programme centred around francophone countries, while Britain's contribution is based on developing African military staff colleges into centres for excellence for regional peace keeping. It provides British Military Advisory and Training Team (BMATT) to Southern African region based in Zimbabwe, and the West African region based in Ghana. Other members of the G8 provide regional and bilateral training assistance to AU member states as part of peace operations capability enhancement.[36]

In conclusion, the responsibility for security in Africa lies within African states and regional organizations. If the AU desires to become a leading organization for maintaining peace and security on the continent, it must seize the opportunity to implement the provisions of the Constitutive Act. Its success will depend on how effectively it can respond to situations of armed conflict and also on the extent to which the presence of AU or regional peacekeeping forces will manage the strategic and operational challenges required to resolve complex multidimensional threats to peace and security. It remains to be seen whether AU member states have the political will to develop and implement a common defence policy and effectively commit forces for the ASF. On the other hand, the experiences of ECOWAS and SADC on conflict resolution provide a foundation from which the formation of the ASF can build, while taking advantage of the training assistance provided by the developed countries to improve military professionalism required enhancing peace keeping capabilities.   Despite the fact that African leaders have recognized the need to take primary responsibility for responding to crises, their ability to undertake credible and effective peace keeping operations remains limited. In spite of their

efforts and initiatives, African countries are not yet in a position to address peace and security issues without direct assistance from the Western countries. But the ASF provides a working framework for continued development.

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